

# ***LAKE OF THE WOODS LAND ALLOCATION CHANGE***

## ***ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY***

### **Proposed Action in Brief**

The Fremont-Winema National Forest Supervisor proposes to amend the Winema National Forest Plan by changing land allocations on approximately 5,000 acres within the Klamath Ranger District. Specifically, the Forest Supervisor proposes to remove about 2,000 acres around Lake of the Woods from the system of Late-Successional Reserves (LSR) on the Klamath Ranger District. The Lake of the Woods area's underlying Winema National Forest Plan allocation of Developed Recreation (Administratively Withdrawn) would remain in place. The Forest Supervisor also proposes to add approximately 2,850 acres within the Cold Springs area to the system of LSR.

### **Why This Action Is Proposed**

The area around Lake of the Woods (LOW) is currently allocated to Late-Successional Reserve, but is minimally suitable as habitat for species dependent on late-successional habitats. The Lake of the Woods area is about half water (not suitable as late-successional habitat) and receives high recreation use. The area is highly developed with several campgrounds, a resort, and approximately 220 recreational residences. The Forest Service and others have identified conflicts between management needed for the recreation area (such as hazard tree removal and fuels reduction) and conditions needed to benefit late-successional species (such as snags and down wood).

This proposal responds to two underlying needs:

1. A higher quality LSR, than what currently exists around Lake of the Woods. The area around Lake of the Woods that is currently allocated to LSR is minimally functional.
2. Consistency with Northwest Forest Plan by ensuring that the LSR on the Klamath Ranger District remains similar in size with improved function

### **Other Alternatives To Meet the Need**

The Lake of the Woods Land Allocation Change Environmental Assessment (EA) considers the two additional action alternatives, which would remove LSR status from Lake of the Woods, and add LSR status to Burton Butte [Alternative 2] or remove LSR status from Lake of the Woods, and add LSR status Little Aspen [Alternative 3]). See attached maps.

### **What Would it Mean to Not Meet the Need?**

Without action, the quality of LSR habitats near Lake of the Woods would continue to deteriorate while lands in the other areas continue to be managed in ways that might not maintain or enhance late successional conditions. Over time, habitats currently suitable for LSR, allocated to other uses, may lose their LSR suitability.

## **Factors in Making the Decision Between Alternatives**

The Forest Supervisor will base the decision on the extent to which each alternative improves LSR function, while maintaining the size of the LSR network and remaining consistent with the Northwest Forest Plan. Additional decision factors include the potential effects of the land allocation change on vegetation (including timber and fire/fuels), grazing, and recreation management programs; soils and water; and special status plant, wildlife and fish species.

## **Effects of the Proposed Action and Action Alternatives**

The most important effects of the Proposed Action and both action alternatives are:

- 1) Acreage of spotted owl nesting, roosting, and foraging habitat in LSR would be increased, without significant change in overall LSR acreage.
- 2) The Forest Service's ability to manage the LSR network to meet LSR objectives would be improved.
- 3) The Forest Service's ability to manage the Lake of the Woods recreation site would be improved.
- 4) The Matrix landbase would be reduced by about 2 percent. Forty to fifty million board feet of standing timber would no longer be available for programmed timber harvest from the Matrix land allocation.
- 5) Vegetation (including forest health and fire and fuels management) and recreation management complexity in the Cold Springs, Burton Butte, or Little Aspen parcels would be increased if any were selected for LSR status. Burton Butte has the most mixed ownership and development potential, thus there may be more potential for future conflicts there than within the other parcels. Burton Butte also has the only grazing allotment that could be affected if that parcel were allocated LSR (Alternative 2).

## **Mitigation and Monitoring**

No ground-disturbing activities would be approved in any alternative. Mitigation measures would be applied at the project scale when/if ground-disturbing activities are proposed. These measures would be developed to meet standards applicable to each Forest Plan management area. Adherence to Forest Plan standards is expected to mitigate long term environmental risks related to National Forest management.

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Winema National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan led to the inclusion of a Monitoring Plan within Chapter 5 of the Forest Plan (pages 207-231). The Monitoring Plan identifies key activities and outputs to be tracked to ensure that activities reasonably conform to Management Area direction and that outputs satisfy the objectives of the plan. This project does not propose any additional monitoring because Forest Plan monitoring will be relied upon and is considered adequate.